

MINUTE

of

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Minute of Special Meeting held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 14 June 2018.

Present:

Councillor Annette Ireland (Chair)
 Councillor Paul Aitken
 Councillor Caroline Bamforth
 Councillor Tony Buchanan
 Councillor Angela Convery
 Provost Jim Fletcher
 Councillor Alan Lafferty

Councillor David Macdonald
 Councillor Jim McLean
 Councillor Colm Merrick
 Councillor Stewart Miller
 Councillor Paul O’Kane
 Councillor Jim Swift

Councillor Ireland in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Andy Cahill, Director of Environment; Sean McDaid, Principal Planner; Graham Shankland, Principal Business Intelligence Officer; Karen Barrie, Principal Strategy Officer; Ian Walker, Senior Planner; Richard Mowatt, Environmental Health Officer; John Marley, Transportation Co-ordinator; Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager; and Paul O’Neil, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Betty Cunningham; Danny Devlin; Charlie Gilbert; Barbara Grant; and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

467. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

PRE-DETERMINATION HEARING – ERECTION OF RETIREMENT RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY, CARE HOME AND MULTI-PURPOSE VILLAGE CENTRE AND FORMATION OF NEW ACCESS ROAD FROM AURS ROAD (MAJOR) AT NETHERPLACE WORKS, NETHERPLACE ROAD, NEWTON MEARNS BY NEWTON MEARNS PROJECTS LIMITED (REF NO: 2017/0359/TP)

468. The committee considered a report by the Director of Environment, on an application for planning permission for the proposed erection of a retirement residential community, care home and multi-purpose village centre and formation of new access road from Aurs Road (Major) at Netherplace Works, Netherplace Road, Newton Mearns by Newton Mearns Projects Limited (Ref.No: 2017/0359/TP).

The Principal Planner explained that the application was a Major development under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009; in the course of which it was noted that the site was identified in the adopted East Renfrewshire Local Plan to be retained for business/industrial purposes. He stated that as the re-development of the site was for residential development and a care home it was therefore considered that the proposal was a significant departure from the development plan and had to be the subject of a pre-determination hearing by the Planning Applications Committee before being determined by the full Council. He referred to the assessment of the proposal as outlined in the Report of Handling and to the report's recommendation.

At this stage, the Chair invited the applicant's representatives, Mr Robert Booth and Mr Jon Jewitt, to speak in support of the application.

Mr Booth began by stating that the developer was a resident of East Renfrewshire and had a range of business interests including some in the Far East. Whilst highlighting that the application site had been an abandoned industrial site, he stated that the proposed development if approved, would offer employment opportunities in accordance with strategic policy SG6. He also highlighted that an economic impact analysis had been carried out which concluded that there would be significant economic benefit to the area both during and after construction. Concluding his remarks, he explained that in developing the proposal consideration had been given to the Council's local plan policies and that should the proposal be approved the developer would work in partnership with the Council.

Mr Jewitt then commented on the design of the project in the course of which he highlighted that it was a wholly new approach to the one that had previously been approved by the Council. He stated that by working with the Council's Planning Department and the Health and Social Care Partnership a far more sensitive approach had been taken to the proposed development.

Whilst noting that the scheme density had been reduced from 320 in the previously approved scheme to 252 dwellings, Mr Jewitt stated that as a result the development consisted of much larger apartments, terraced cottages and retained the central features of the village centre and care home, with the residential form acting as an acoustic barrier and green wall to the M77 motorway. Furthermore, he stated that the design had been heavily influenced by a similar specialist dementia village at Hogeweyk, near Amsterdam.

Mr Jewitt then stated that whilst the perimeter blocks provided inward looking acoustic protection from the M77 motorway, the central area of the village had intimate pedestrian spaces with both private and common gardens leading to a bowling green and village centre. He also explained that the proposed care home, providing both nursing care and dementia care was immediately adjacent to the village centre so that there was no feeling of isolation to the resident, who could enjoy the facilities as much as anyone else. He provided details of the village centre highlighting that it would also feature a nursery not only to assist the staff with child care, but to attract the local community to use the village, an idea that was proposed by the Health and Social Care Partnership during pre-application consultations. He also indicated that to ensure direct contact with the local community and amenities there would be regular bus shuttle services provided to Patterton train station and shopping centres such as The Avenue and Silverburn. In addition, several electric pool cars would be available at the village centre to provide residents with car club facilities as part of the project's sustainable transport plan.

Concluding his remarks, Mr Jewitt stated that the proposals represented the cutting edge in residential design for the over 55s and that this was a proposal that focussed directly on their wide variety of needs. He stated that aging in place was the key to the proposals. Few people had the luxury of remaining in their own homes, if they could not be adapted to meet their increasing needs. As a result, this subsequently left little option but to move to direct nursing care, where the average stay was only two years. He stressed that retirement villages throughout the world were showing that this style of development extended independent quality of living in a safe and dignified environment by between 10 to 15 years and provided bespoke, adaptable housing for over twice this length of time.

At this stage Members had an opportunity to question the applicant's representatives.

In response to a question by Councillor Bamforth regarding the types of jobs that would be created at the proposed development, Mr Booth explained that a variety of jobs would be created including care, ground maintenance, bar, catering and nursing staff. Whilst noting Councillor Bamforth's comments about the difficulties the Council had experienced in recruiting appropriate staff for Council operated care homes and the costs associated with using staff from agencies, he stated that the proposal would be a luxury development and in view of this his client would be looking to recruit the very best staff to work at the development with associated high pay levels.

Mr Booth also responded to a point made by Councillor McLean in the course of which he explained that his client did have the necessary permission to use the farmer's field to construct the access road from Aurs Road.

In response to a question by Councillor Convery, Mr Jewitt stated that the first phase of the construction would involve the installation of the acoustic barrier between the site and the M77 motorway. He also emphasised Netherplace Road was not a suitable road to use as access to the site. Furthermore he indicated that two acres of farmer's land had been granted to the applicant and it was proposed to align the access road as close to the M77 motorway so as to minimise the impact to the farmer's field.

Councillor Swift commented on the proposal to provide electric cars at the proposed development and sought clarification of how many parking spaces would be made available. In reply, Mr Jewitt stated that parking would be provided throughout the site and that a ratio of 0.25 per dwelling had been used. He further indicated and that the proposals complied with the requirements of the Council's roads service. However, he stressed that it was proposed to use shuttle buses to transport residents to and from local shopping centres and transport links.

At this stage, the Principal Planner confirmed that 225 parking spaces would be provided at the site in the course of which Mr Jewitt re-iterated that there would be 252 houses at the site.

Councillor Swift sought clarification as to how many parking spaces would be provided for staff working at the development in the course of which Mr Jewitt explained that there one of the features of the development was not to rely on cars being brought into the site given that it was proposed to make use of shuttle buses and car pools.

In response to a question by Councillor Macdonald regarding whether the apartments would be air conditioned, Mr Jewitt stated that the development would be naturally ventilated although air conditioning might be required for the care home. Having noted the response, Councillor Macdonald suggested that if residents were to leave their windows open there might be problems of noise given the close proximity of proposed development to the M77 motorway.

In reply, Mr Jewitt explained that the only windows facing towards the motorway would be those in kitchens or store rooms in the course of which he reiterated the proposals to install an acoustic barrier at the site to minimise noise coming from the motorway. In response to a further question, it was noted that the nearest transport link was approximately was 2.5 miles from the site although that he stressed that the shuttle buses would be used to transport residents to and from shopping centres and the railway station and that they would also be used to transport staff to and from the site.

At this stage, the Chair invited Ms Audrey Gilbride to speak in support of her representation.

Ms Gilbride referred to the location of her house in relation to the application site. She expressed concern about the volume of traffic using Netherplace Road on a daily basis which in her opinion was a dangerous road and that the proposed development was likely to increase the traffic on the road. She also referred to the boundary of the application site in relation to her garden and expressed concern about the potential for her property to be overlooked given that it was proposed to erect two and four storey buildings at the development. Furthermore, the trees that were in her garden on the boundary of the site were nearly at the end of their lifespan and in her opinion, the boundary would need to be enhanced. Concluding her remarks, she expressed concerns about the adverse impact the proposed development would have on services provided by the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

At this stage members of the committee had an opportunity to question the objector.

In reply to a question by Councillor Swift as to whether she would be satisfied if the applicant was to plant more trees on the boundary of her property, Ms Gilbride confirmed this would address her concerns.

Councillor Aitken sought clarification how the proposed development would have an adverse impact on HSCP resources to which Ms Gilbride replied that there would be additional demands on GP resources from residents living at the development.

At this stage, the Chair invited the applicant's representative to sum up.

Mr Booth stated that the business model of the proposed development was well developed in England and Wales; that it would be a luxury development with health support provided on site. He also commented on the provision of a workplace nursery and the range of events that would be planned at the village centre. Whilst emphasising that the applicant proposed to work in partnership with the Council, he stated that subject to the approval of the application, it was proposed to move to construction as soon as possible. Concluding his remarks, he referred to commitments that had been made to the site's neighbour and to the significant number of jobs that would be created.

At this point the Chair explained that the public part of the hearing had concluded, that members now had the opportunity to give consideration to the Report of Handling and ask questions of officers on any points they had in relation to the assessment of the application.

The Principal Planner exhibited a plan to the committee showing the various buildings proposed to be erected at the development in the course of which he explained the differing heights of each of the buildings and advised that the care home would be two storeys in height.

Commenting on the plan that was exhibited to the committee, Councillor Swift expressed the view that judging from the contours on the plan it appeared that the ground was rising towards from the centre of the site towards the boundary of the site.

In reply, the Principal Planner stated that the application site which was formerly Netherplace Works lay in a dip. He also referred Councillor Swift to the terms of Condition 6 proposed to be attached to the consent regarding the proposed landscaping arrangements at the site.

Councillor Lafferty commented that given the concerns that had been expressed when consideration was given to the previous application about the potential for an increase in care provision, enquired whether any representations had been received from the Health and Social Care Partnership. In reply, the Principal Planner stated that no such representations had been received from the HSCP.

Councillor Convery sought clarification why officers were recommending approval of the application given that it was a significant departure from the local development plan,

In reply, the Principal Planner outlined the assessment of the application against policy and stated that whilst consideration had to be given to the Council's local plan policies in the assessment consideration also required to be given to any material considerations associated with the application. He explained that one of the material considerations was whether there was going to be a realistic prospect of employment occurring on the site for industrial purposes in the future in the course of which he stressed that most of the new employment opportunities were being offered at the business incubator units at Greenlaw. Concluding his remarks, he also stated that the recommendation to approve the application was in line with the recommendation for the proposal that had been previously approved by the committee. He also cited the employment opportunities that would arise from the proposed development and the intended land use at the site.

Provost Fletcher commented on the fact that the site had been derelict for a considerable period of time and that there were safety concerns about the site. He stated that in the event that the committee approved the application he hoped that this would not set a precedent in terms of allowing future development to take place in the Greenbelt. Concluding his remarks, he also enquired whether an application for a traditional housing development at the site would have been supported in a similar way to the application under consideration.

In reply, the Principal Planner stated that the proposed development was different from a traditional housing development insofar as it was designed for the elderly whereas major developers normally built houses that were designed for families. He also indicated that if a traditional house builder had submitted an application for housing at the site it was unlikely that it would have been supported given the fact that the Council had a sufficient housing land supply elsewhere in East Renfrewshire.

In response to a question by Councillor Miller, the Principal Planner stated that subject to the application being approved it would not set a precedent and that it would be subject to a legal agreement in the course of which the Principal Strategy Officer stated that heads of terms had been agreed with the applicant in relation to a Section 75 agreement. However, she stated that if no Section 75 agreement was achieved then the proposed development would not proceed.

In response to a question by Councillor McLean about the terms of Condition 14 and where the drains would feed into, the Principal Planner stated that this was a requirement by Transport Scotland. He stated that the drainage connection would go out to the north of the site. Responding to a question by Councillor Buchanan as to whether the current application was better compared to the previous application that was approved by the Council for a similar development at the site, the Principal Planner stated that the current application was a much more considered proposal insofar as it was an interesting concept in terms of its design and how it mitigated the noise from the M77 motorway.

Councillor O'Kane acknowledged the comments made about the demographics in East Renfrewshire in terms of the growing elderly population although in the course of which he emphasised that the committee's decision had to be based on planning grounds. Concluding his remarks, he expressed the view that it would be difficult to refuse the application on this basis.

Councillor Bamforth expressed concerns about the adverse impact the proposed development would have on services provided by the Health and Social Care Partnership and their associate costs in the course of which Councillor Aitken sought clarification whether concerns of this nature were a planning issue.

In reply, the Principal Planner stated that such concerns were not a planning issue and that in assessing the application limited weight would be given to such issues

At this stage, Councillor Swift, seconded by Councillor Miller, moved that it be **recommended to the Council** that subject to the conclusion of a legal agreement(s) relating to affordable housing and developer contributions, the application be granted subject to conditions as set out in the report; and that it be remitted to the Director of Environment to modify Condition 6 to address the concerns of the objector.

Councillor Bamforth, seconded by Councillor Lafferty, moved as an amendment that the application be refused on the grounds of the adverse impact the proposed development would have on services provided by the Health and Social Care Partnership.

On a vote being taken 8 members voted for the motion and 5 members voted for the amendment. The motion was accordingly declared carried and it was agreed to **recommend to the Council** that subject to the conclusion of a legal agreement(s) relating to affordable housing and developer contributions, the application be granted, subject to conditions as set out in the report; and that it be remitted to the Director of Environment to modify Condition 6 to address the concerns of the objector.

CHAIR